

## MontCo transgender bill challenged

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A bill banning discrimination against transgender people in Montgomery County is facing a court challenge.

Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays and Gays executive director Regina Griggs said her group, along with the Derwood Alliance Church and Women's Christian Temperance Union of Maryland, has asked a public interest law firm to fight the legislation the Montgomery County Council

approved unanimously Tuesday.

The bill covers housing, employment, public accommodations, cable television and taxicab service. It says operators of buildings with rest rooms and locker rooms may designate who can use them. And it gives employers the right to require their employees to adhere to reasonable workplace appearance, grooming and dress standards.

Griggs said the bill is flawed.

"Any time politicians write a law that violates the rights of others by forcibly invading their privacy and forcing faith-

based organizations and small employers to hire cross-dressers, it's a bad law."

The bill's original sponsor, council member Duchy Trachtenberg, said she's received spiteful messages and threats over the bill.

"The bill is nothing more and nothing less than civil rights legislation. It's unfortunate that such a small group of very vocal citizens has been able to advance their ideologic preference to get national attention."

Trachtenberg said she's not surprised by the court challenge. Some opponents of

the bill have suggested she is transgender, she said. "(They) left a message on my home phone asking my husband if he knows my sex."

The three groups filing the lawsuit went to Advocates of Faith and Freedom, a California-based public interest law firm, before the bill was adopted and the firm notified the council the day after the bill passed that it will be challenged in court.

"The bill doesn't make common or legal sense," Robert H. Tyler, the firm's general

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counsel, said.

"If someone comes into a store and wants to try on a dress, identifying themselves as transgender, how does the owner know he's not a predator or a peeping Tom, or someone who will commit rape?" Tyler said. Speaking by phone

from his office in California, he said, "People could be held liable because we are offering them privacy."

Tyler said female residents' right to privacy should prohibit males from using restrooms or locker rooms designated for women. "It is ridiculous to place the desires of persons suffering

from gender identity disorder in front of the constitutional rights and safety of 99 percent of the residents in Montgomery County."

In an e-mail sent to the council Tuesday, Tyler said the bill's vague language renders it unconstitutional, infringes on the rights of religious organizations regarding whom they may employ, and

puts the safety and privacy of citizens at risk by allowing people with a mental disorder to decide which restrooms, locker rooms and other facilities they use.

He told the council that the American Psychiatric Association classifies gender identity disorder as a treatable mental illness.